

Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind
Policies and Procedures
Section: 1100
Subsection: Communication Policy

Revised June 05

Reference: RID Code

Purpose: To establish guidelines when requesting an interpreter and to establish use of sign language communication in all public areas and at ISDB functions.

Policy:

The Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind's (ISDB) philosophy is to provide a twenty-four (24) educational learning experience for all students. In an effort to promote respect towards all, to create a visual environment that allows equal access to communication, and to ensure a safe environment, the following manual communication practices will be adhered to by all staff and students. It is expected that all students and staff will use manual communications in public areas on campus and at ISDB sponsored activities (on and off campus).

When requesting interpreting/translating services:

Any individual may request interpreting or translation services and when doing so should contact the Interpreting Services Coordinator. The request should include the following.

- Use correct forms when needed.
- Identify the time and date(s) needed.
- Identify the context of the meeting, i.e., IEP, personal, workshop, etc.
- Provide printed information when relevant/possibly ahead of time.

Communication Guidelines for Meetings:

- Introduce the interpreter at the beginning of each meeting and explain the role of the interpreter.
- Facilitate correct utilization of an Interpreter, i.e., refrain from asking an interpreter to 'step out of his/her role' to participate in the meeting.
- Make sure the interpreter is correctly positioned to maximize communication during the meeting, i.e., ask the consumer(s) and interpreter to identify where they should be positioned in relation to one another.
- Only one person should speak at a time.

Definitions:

- **Public Areas** – hallways, cafeteria, cottage living areas, library, classrooms, computer lab(s), gymnasiums, offices, infirmary, buses/school vans, playgrounds, Tar Pit, etc.
- **Manual Communication** – using sign language to communicate with another individual(s).
- **Oral Communication** – using speech and or mouthing words while signing to another person. ISDB encourages all with the ability to speak and/or mouth words well to use this medium to enhance communication interactions.
- **Interpreter(s)** – Those individuals who are employed to facilitate communication (expressive, receptive and/or translation) through sign and/or Spanish.
- **Translation** – The act of changing oral or print information into another language form.

TOTAL COMMUNICATION

WHAT IS MEANT BY “TOTAL COMMUNICATION” (TC)?

TC is the title of a philosophy of communication, not a method. TC may involve one or several modes of communication (manual, oral, auditory, written), depending on the particular needs of the child. The original expectation of TC was for teachers to use the communication method(s) most appropriate for a child at a particular stage of development. Therefore, there would be situations when spoken communication would be appropriate, other situations where signing might be appropriate, others that call for written communication, and still others where **simultaneous communication** might work best.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF TC?

TC is meant to be the bridge that allows a crossover from an oral-only philosophy to a philosophy that embraces sign language.

WHO CAN USE THIS OPTION?

TC may be used by families and educators. Since over 90% of parents of children who are hard of hearing are hearing themselves, many believe that TC is a philosophy that will allow flexibility without eliminating options. By using a total approach of speaking and signing, all members of the family, those who are hearing impaired as well as those who are hearing, have continuous access to the communication occurring in their environment. Teachers may choose to provide TC options in their classrooms, as long as they have the skills necessary to meet all of the children's communication needs.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS OPTION?

The main benefit of TC is that it can open all avenues and modes of communication for the hard of hearing child. Parents and teachers might be reluctant to choose one mode of communication over another. TC, however, allows a variety of combinations. Research studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of TC in other areas of a deaf child's development, such as psychosocial, linguistic, and academic. TC is considered beneficial because it allows the child to use the form that is best for him in any given situation.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS?

One limitation is that it may not be put into practice accurately in some situations. Many students who are deaf are immersed in a form of simultaneous communication that does not match their level of language readiness or ability. In the classroom, TC often becomes a simultaneous practice of combining manual components (signs and fingerspelling) with spoken components used in English word order. Almost all TC education programs combine signing with speech. The very nature of the two modes (spoken and visual) may cause signers/speakers to alter their message to accommodate one or the other mode, compromising between the 2 methods. It may also be impossible for teachers to meet all the communication needs that might be present in a single classroom. Researchers do not agree as to whether a manually coded English system leads to better reading and writing scores.

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WHAT ARE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE CHOOSING THIS OPTION?

- Will children in a TC program be able to communicate with members of the Deaf Community?
- Can English be represented fully with sign language?
- If TC is chosen as an option, what kind of signing will be used?
- Can ASL be an option in a TC program?
- Can one talk and sign ASL at the same time without negatively affecting one or the other?

Revised/Approved – June 2005

Harvey W. Lyter III, Interim Superintendent